

INVITATIONS

TO

COMMUNION

Alec J. Langford

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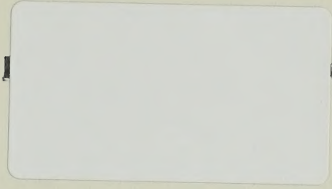
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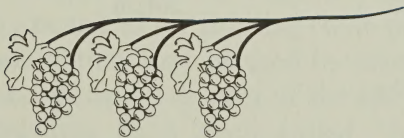
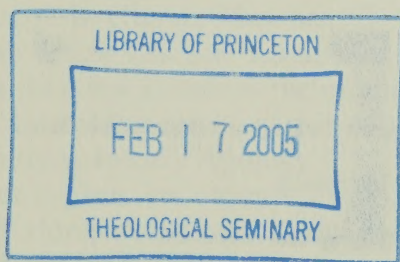
Invitations to communion /



Invitations to Communion

Invitations to Communion

by Alec J. Langford



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An Introduction

The Invitations to Communion presented in this volume represent a variety of both authors and time periods. They were gathered to give easier access to a valuable resource of the church. They have been edited to provide material which has less sexist bias for use in worship services. In a few instances the original wording has been left because of the special nature of the original, e.g. the selection from Justin's Apology.

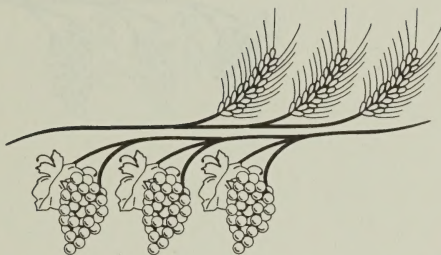
Certain other archaic or obscure expressions have also been edited along with over lengthy or redundant passages. Length has been varied. Some examples have been included tongue-in-cheek. They may serve as private reading or may be useful for printing (with proper credits) in a bulletin where they may be used for silent meditation rather than incorporation as part of the spoken liturgy.

These selections have been called "Invitations to Communion" with the understanding that at times there is a fine line separating them from communion meditations. Someone may have provided a reliable, precise definition that would be helpful in making choices, but we have chosen these selections for the purpose of bringing the worshiping community material that can be

given repeated uses over years of time; indeed many have been given centuries of use. My earlier searches for appropriate communion meditations put me in touch with the fact that they had a transient and unrepeatable quality about them. The Eucharist deserves, needs, demands something which is more enduring.

Seasons of the year and subjects have been suggested as guides only—the user's imagination is far more important—but these are offered as a point of departure. Where authors and sources have been found, credit has been given. To this is added gratitude for those whose inspiration and recording has made our lives richer.

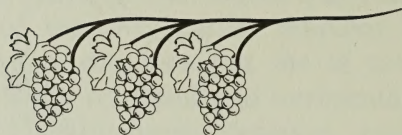
Alec J. Langford



Anticipation/ Advent

Dearly beloved, as we draw near to celebrate the supper of our Lord, let us earnestly consider the great need of having our comfort and strength renewed in this our earthly pilgrimage and warfare; and especially how necessary it is to come to the Lord's table with thanksgiving, faith, repentance, love and with our hearts hungering and thirsting after him. Let us draw near to . . . [the one] who hears prayer, remembering that God listens more to our hearts than to our words. May . . . [God] grant in the holy quiet of this hour, that we find rest and refreshment to our souls.

Adapted from Pilgrim Hymnal, in *A Book of Worship for Free Churches*.
Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 105.



Creation/ Advent

It is fitting that rational creatures should continually
and in every way acknowledge their maker
and fulfill the purpose for which . . .
[they were created].

But we have special reason for doing this,
because we believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We believe
that the life of ancient Israel prepared for his
coming;

We believe
that his life was not only the effort and
achievement of a man but the presence and
action of God.

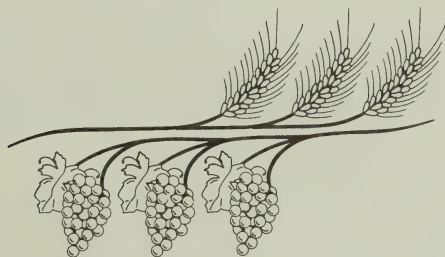
We believe
that he achieved the full stature of
[humanity];
that he defeated the pressure of sin at its
strongest;
that because he has been raised from the dead
and has power to give himself by the Holy Spirit,
he brings the deliverance of God
to all who trust in him.

Thank you, Lord God,
for your generous provision for your world in
Jesus Christ.

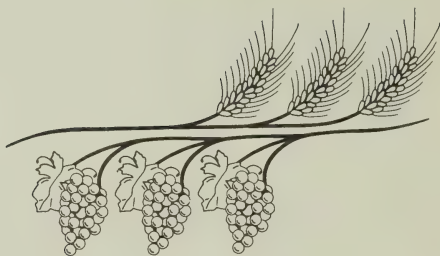
Remembering this,
we celebrate this supper once again.

As we eat and drink,
do for us all that you have promised.

Allow us to share in the life so generously given to the
world. And may all [people] come to know you through
Jesus Christ.



Adapted from *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship*, ed. by Caryl Micklem. Eerdmans, 1967, p. 87.



Humanity/Advent

Come to this sacred table, not because you must but because you may; come to testify, not that you are righteous, but that you sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to be his true disciples: come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak; not because you have any claim on heaven's rewards, but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven's mercy and help: come, not to express an opinion, but to seek a Presence and to pray for a Spirit.

And now that the Supper of the Lord is spread before you, lift up your minds and hearts above all selfish fears and cares; let this bread and this wine be to you the witnesses and signs of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. Before the throne of the heavenly Father and the cross of the Redeemer consecrate your lives to the Christian obedience and service, and pray for strength to do and to bear the holy and blessed will of God.

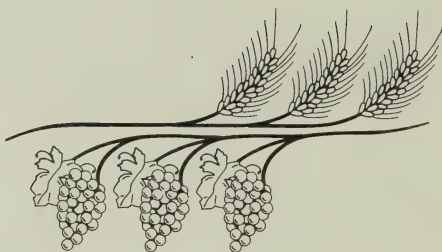
From *Hymnbook for Christian Worship*, ed. by Charles Heaton. CBP Press, 1970, #672 (original source not acknowledged).



Humility/ Advent

Let us come to the table of communion, not because we must, but because we may. Let us sit together in humility and thanksgiving rather than in pride or possessiveness. Let us confess that we are not righteous, but that we love our Lord Jesus Christ and desire to remember him. Let us come, not that we are strong, but that we are needy; not that we have any claim on Christ, but that he invites us to receive his grace and experience his presence. Let us worthily partake that he may be made known to us in the breaking of bread.

From *Christian Worship: A Service Book*, edited by G. Edwin Osborne. CBP Press, 1953, p. 26.



Humility/Advent

A Prayer to Jesus

Thou commandest me to come confidently unto thee, if I would have part with thee; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain everlasting life and glory.

“Come unto me (sayest thou), all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.”

O sweet and loving word in the ear of a sinner, that thou, O my Lord God, shouldst invite the poor and needy to the participation of thy most holy body and blood!

But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach unto thee?

Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee and thou sayest, “Come ye all unto me.”

What meaneth this so gracious a condescension and this so loving invitation?

How shall I dare to come, who knowest not any good in myself, whereupon I may presume?

How shall I bring thee unto my house, I that have so often offended thy most gracious countenance?

Angels and archangels stand in awe of thee: holy and righteous [people] do fear thee: and sayest thou, "Come ye all unto me?"

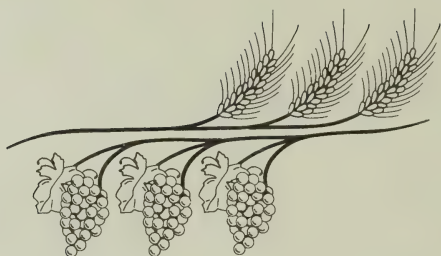
Unless thou, O Lord, didst say this, who would believe it to be true?

And unless thou didst command it, who would attempt to draw near? . . .

Why therefore am I not more ardent and zealous in seeking thine adorable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive thy holy things? whereas those holy ancient patriarchs and prophets, yea kings also and princes, with the whole people, shewed such an affectionateness of devotion to thy divine service.

Adapted from *Of the Imitation of Christ*, Book Four, by Thomas a' Kempis (1380-1471). London: Longmans Green and Company, 1890, p. 172f.



Invitation/ Advent

Come, not because you are strong,
but because you are weak.
Come, not because any goodness of your own gives
you a right to come,
but because you need mercy and help.
Come, because you love the Lord a little
and would like to love . . . more.
Come because [Christ] loved you and gave himself for
you.
Lift up your hearts and minds
above your cares and fears
and let this bread and wine be to you the
token and pledge of the grace
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the spirit,
all meant for you
if you will receive them in humble faith.
I will take the cup of salvation and call upon
the Lord.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after
righteousness for they shall be filled.
O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Adapted from William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, by William Barclay.
Abingdon, 1967, p. 119.

Peace/Advent

As obedient disciples we gather around the Lord's Table. When we come face to face with one another, we discover an added dimension to our faith, that in this fellowship is the true condition for peace within ourselves and around the world. In this feast we rediscover the gift of peace, given by our risen Lord. Here in this redemptive encounter we are aided in preserving and nourishing this precious gift of peace. The church's plea for peace is made evident in the Eucharist as we recognize our need for continued reconciliation and as we willingly accept the gift.





Preparation/Advent

Of a Heart Fit for the Holy Communion

I am the lover of purity and the giver of all sanctity.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

Make ready for me a large upper room furnished,
and I will keep the passover at thy house with my
disciples.

If thou wilt have me come unto thee, and remain with
thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habita-
tion of thy heart.

Shut out the whole world and all the throng of sins:
sit thou as it were a sparrow alone upon a house-top, and
think over thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul.

For every one that loveth will prepare the best and
fairest place for . . . [the] beloved; for herein is known the
affection of . . . [one] that entertaineth . . . [a] beloved.

Know thou notwithstanding, that the merit of no
action of thine is able to make this preparation sufficient,
although thou shouldest prepare thyself a whole year
together, and have nothing else in thy mind.

But it is out of my mere grace and favor that thou art permitted to come to my table. As if a beggar were invited to a rich man's dinner, and . . . hath no other return to make to him for his benefits, but to humble himself and give him thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently; not for custom, not for necessity; but with fear and reverence and affection receive the body and blood of thy beloved Savior, when he vouch-safeth to come unto thee. . . .

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by me, and united unto me, that thou mayest receive new grace, and be stirred up anew to amendment of life. . . .

But thou oughtest not only prepare thyself to devotion before communion, but carefully also to preserve thyself therein, after thou has received this sacrament.

Nor is the careful guard of thyself afterwards less required, than devout preparation before. . . .

I am he, to whom thou oughtest wholly to give up thyself, that so thou mayest live the rest of thy time, not in thyself, but in me, and be free from all anxious care.

Unity/Advent

Anamnesis

Leader: Wherefore, Lord, we celebrate today the memorial of our redemption:

we recall the birth and life of your Son among us, his baptism by John, his last meal with the apostles, his death and descent to the abode of the dead;

we proclaim Christ's resurrection and ascension in glory, where as our Great High Priest he ever intercedes for all people;

and we look for his coming at the last.

United in Christ's priesthood,

we present to you this memorial:

Remember the sacrifice of your son and grant to people everywhere the benefits of Christ's redemptive work.

Congregation: Maranatha, the Lord comes!

Epiclesis II

Leader: Behold, Lord, this eucharist which you yourself gave to the Church and graciously receive it, as you accept the offering of your Son whereby we are reinstated in your Covenant.

As we partake of Christ's body and blood, fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may be one single body and one single spirit in Christ, a living sacrifice to the praise of your glory.

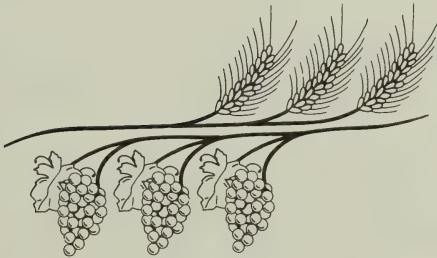
Congregation: Come, Creator Spirit!

Anamnesis and Epiclesis II from the "Lima Liturgy" used by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, January 15, 1982 at Lima Peru. The Feast of Life, The Eucharist of the Sixth Assembly of the WCC, Vancouver, 1983, p. 6.

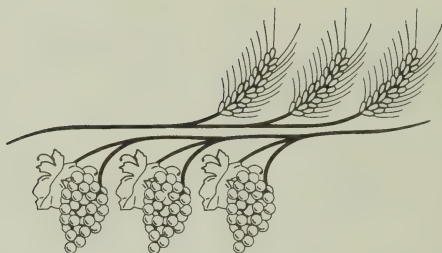
We offer these gifts . . . We offer this bread,
We offer this cup,
We offer ourselves,
To be united with the one full, perfect and sufficient offering of Jesus Christ, who, the night before he offered himself for us, took bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, he took the cup after the supper and said, "Drink it, all of you, for this is my blood which seals God's promise, my blood poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do it in remembrance of me."

Therefore, taking this bread and this cup in remembrance of him, we lift up our hearts and give thanks to God.



From *Ventures in Worship*, Vol. 3, p. 122, edited by David James Randolph.
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Creation/New Year

It is indeed right and fitting that we should praise and adore and magnify the Lord, the Creator of all, whom the powers of heaven glorify—the sun, the moon, the stars; the earth and the sea also; and the firstborn whose names are enrolled in heaven.

Therefore, with angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify [God's] glorious name, and say:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.

Heaven and earth are full of the
majesty of thy glory.

Glory be to thee, O Lord most high. . . .

Lord Jesus, who hast accounted us worthy to partake of this sacrament of thy holy body and blood; lo, we are bold to draw near, and call upon thy holy name. Come thou and communicate with us in this eucharist, which we celebrate in thy name, and the love-feast wherein we are gathered together at thy behest.



History/New Year

Yes, it is right, only right, the only thing which is
always and everywhere right, that we . . .
should give thanks to you our God the source of
all being,
the controller of the process of creation,
the matchless and tireless director of operations
for our rescue and rehabilitation.

From the first we were called as God's people,
God's family, God's children.
God brought them out of slavery into freedom—
Gave them bread from heaven to eat—
Sprang water for them from the flinty rock.

God's presence was like a bright cloud overshadowing
them—

like smoke on the mountain for Moses the
Lawgiver,

like smoke in the temple for Isaiah the Prophet—
too much for mortal eyes and unclean lips: yet the
face shone which had approached that brightness,
and the voice rang clear for truth
which had cried, "Woe is me!"

And God remains the same, yesterday, today and forever.
High and lifted up, yet dwelling among us;
making all things new through the one appointed;
Jesus Christ, in whom the law and prophets
are complete.

In him deity is plainly revealed as heavenly Parent
and we are divine family and household.
In him we have been rescued from the power of darkness
and brought into the light of God's promise.
In him we have received the bread of life, and an
inner spring always welling up for eternal life.
Like a bright cloud God overshadowed his baptism.
Under the same token and presence he was transfigured
on the mountain.
And now, beyond death, divine glory has received
him out of our sight, whereby we know
that his forgiveness is God's forgiveness,
his attitude toward humanity is God's
attitude to people eternally.
God, we have all sinned and fall short of your glory.
Have mercy upon us.
Burn out the evil in us and make us your messengers:
let us reflect your presence wherever we go,
and may our voices ring clear for truth
whether it is popular or not.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Changed from prayer format to part prayer, part statement. See *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship*, ed. by Caryl Micklem. Eerdmans, 1967, p. 86.

Enlightenment/Epiphany/Low Sunday

Luke, the evangelist, wrote of our risen Lord, that when he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

[People] . . . will come from the east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

Come, for all is ready.



Adapted from *The Book of Common Worship*, Provisional Services. Westminster, 1966, p. 41.

Prayer/Epiphany

Leader: The master shared plain bread with those who loved him. On the last night before the fatal plot was laid, the blessing that he spoke made *all* bread sacred. The glory of that shared loaf cannot fade as long as people pray,

People: "Give us this day our daily bread."

Leader: Within the cup his holy face reflected bore lines of anguish for his undiscerning friends, but loyal love shone from his eyes to pardon stumbling minds; redeeming fellowship with mercy blends as long as people pray,

People: "Forgive us our transgressions."

Leader: For living bread our hungry souls are yearning; our thirsty spirits crave that cup divine. No barriers of race or creed or nation can break the sacramental comradeship of bread and wine as long as people pray.



From *Ventures in Worship, Vol. 1*, p. 45, edited by David James Randolph.
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Stewardship/Epiphany

In the Eucharistic service of the church the idea of offering is more fully and forcefully expressed than in any other Christian ordinance. . . . The church has throughout history felt this to be the case. With the exception of a comparatively small number in recent times, her members have never been able to rest in the idea that the Sacrament of the Supper is simply a memorial of the death of Christ. They have beheld in it in one sense or another, an offering which they make to God, as well as a remembrance of what God had done for them. . . . The offering thus made in the Eucharist . . . is an oblation in which the offerer, offering . . . [the self], lives, having accepted death as the penalty of sin in him who died upon the cross; but having now through death entered into life, the life of him who died once and dieth no more. As our Lord's offering of himself . . . never ends, or can end; so in that offering his people, organically united to him, one with him, must be offered and must offer themselves; and this they do in the expressive and touching symbols of the Eucharist. . . . In the Sacrament of the Supper, in short, they offer themselves in him who is now and forever an offering to. . . . [God].



William Milligan in *A Companion to the Communion Service*, by William Robinson. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 53.

p. 53.

Sharing/Laity Sunday

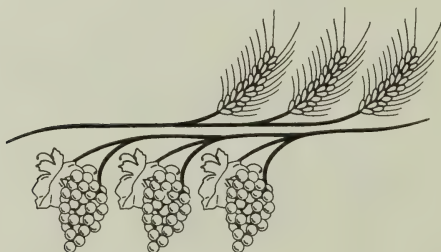
Rye bread, whole wheat bread, hard rolls, wafers, crackers, pizza, puffed wheat, corn bread, white bread, pancakes, tacos, fritos:

At some time and in one place or another we presume each one of these has been elevated to the sacred height of use as an element in the eucharist. We know also that they have been used to sustain life in countless places.

Grape juice, water, wine, pop, orange juice, guava juice, blackberry juice, cranberry juice, Coca Cola:

At some time and in one place or another we presume each one of these has been consecrated and used as an element in the eucharist. We know also that these have been and are being used to preserve people from dying of thirst.

“Do this in remembrance of me,” Jesus said, and something ordinary became something extraordinary. Do this in remembrance of me, and for us the common event becomes an uncommon occasion of fellowship, remembering, sacrifice and sharing. In this mood and with these thoughts we come to the Lord’s Table.



Alec J. Langford, March 8, 1980.

And the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was
betrayed, took bread *brot*, brother, bother, mother,
father, brother

took bread, and when he had broken it

when he had borne and torn it

ripped it and hurt it

crushed it and mangled it

separated it into pieces

gave it to the disciples, betrayers all, each in his own way,

and said, "Take, eat, this is my body, which

is broken for you." . . .

And in like manner also he took the cup, after

they had eaten, and said, "This cup—this

brimming, shimmering, death-down liquefaction

of the vine, tart and vinegary to the taste,

but dear as food to the eating of it—this cup

is the new covenant in my blood."

New covenant. New lease on life. New gift of God,

whose old gifts are always new,

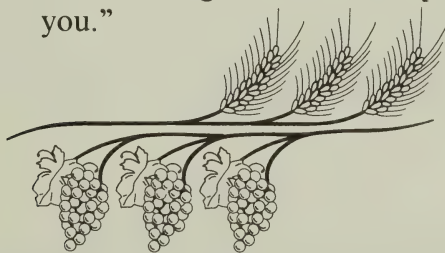
though needing sometimes some new gift

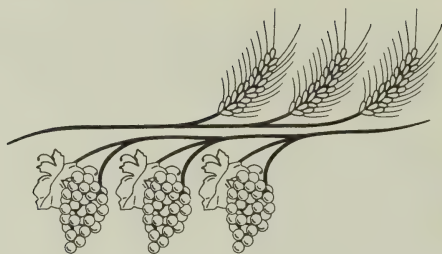
to discover that. New sign of love—at a skull,

and place of death. Love to the death.

"All of you drink of it. And when you do,

remember me. Bring me back to be present with
you."





Compassion/Lent

In the same night that he was betrayed, Jesus took some bread, gave thanks to God for the gift of bread, divided it and distributed it to the disciples. He said, "Take and eat this, because this is my body, which is given for you. Do this when you remember me."

Likewise, after supper he took the cup of wine and gave thanks for it. He gave it to his disciples, saying "Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood, which shows the new love between God and [humanity]. It is poured out for you and for everyone to restore your love for one another and for God. Share in the cup of wine to remember me."

And so, [our God], we remember your son in these signs of bread and wine. Please accept our praise and thanks, and give us the feeling that we really belong together. May your spirit be with us. When we eat the bread and drink the wine, may we be filled with your life and blessing, with Jesus Christ as our helper.

Amen.

Adapted from "Don Mills Youth Service," in *Experiment and Liturgy*. The Anglican Church of Canada, c. 1959, p. 60.

Confession/Lent

Fellow Christians, when we meet together, we should thank God who is the source of love, guidance and goodness. Moreover, the scriptures urge us to confess openly our sins before God who alone is the source of full forgiveness. Therefore, let us confess our sins to God.

God the forgiving one, you know the secrets of all hearts and we confess to you that we have sinned in our thoughts, our words and our actions. Forgive us we pray; and may the Holy Spirit give us strength to love and live perfectly.

Lord have mercy upon us,
Christ have mercy upon us,
Lord have mercy upon us.

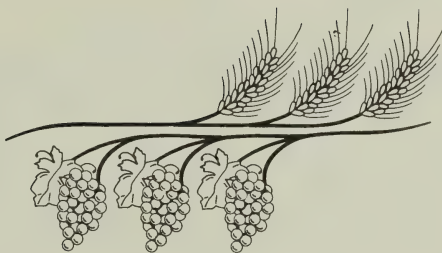


Desire/Lent

“With desire, I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” *Luke 22:15.*

If the saviour with desire, desires to eat this passover with us, shall there be no corresponding desire in our heart? Will there be no answering response? It is all he asks for—desire. If we come humbly because we need, because we want, because we desire, he will fulfill the desire of them that fear him. It is not only that he gives gracious gifts for our need in sorrow, or temptation, or sin, and not only that he gives love, but also that he gives himself. When we can say, “There is none on earth that I desire besides thee,” we are on the way to be satisfied.

Hugh Black in *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*, ed. by Charles L. Wallis. Harper and Row, 1954, p. 77.



Humility/Lent

We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

From *The Book of Common Prayer*. Oxford University Press, p. 179.

Nourishment/Lent

Dearly beloved in the Lord, forasmuch as we are now assembled to celebrate the Holy Communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, let us consider these words of St. Paul, how he exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves before they presume to eat of that bread and to drink of that cup; for as the benefit is great, if, with a true and penitent heart and lively faith, we receive that holy sacrament . . . so is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily, for then we be guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour, we eat and drink our own damnation, not considering the Lord's body, we kindle God's wrath against us. . . .

Let us consider, then, that this sacrament is a singular medicine for all poor sick creatures, a comfortable help to weak souls, and that our Lord requireth no other worthiness on our part but that we unfeignedly acknowledge our naughtiness and imperfection. Then, to the end that we may be worthy partakers of his merits, and most comfortable benefits, which is the true eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, let us not suffer our minds to wonder about the consideration of these earthly and corruptible things. . . . [The] only way to dispose our souls to receive nourishment, relief, and quickening of his substance is to lift up our minds by faith above all things worldly and sensible, and thereby to enter into heaven, that we may find and receive Christ, where he dwelleth undoubtedly very God and very [Human] in the incomprehensible glory of . . . [God], to whom be all praise, honour and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Adapted from John Knox (1514-72) in what is commonly called "John Knox's Liturgy" in William Robinson's, *A Companion to the Communion Service*. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 47.

Dearly beloved, it is right that we who would come to the Lord's Table should take to heart the mystery of this sacrament. The mystery is this: that Christ truly gives unto us his body and blood as food and drink of everlasting life. The Good Shepherd has laid down his life for the sheep; he who was without guile has died for sinners, the Head for his members, the Bridegroom for his bride the Church; in obedience to . . . [God's] will and in infinite love to us, the High Priest has offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. By his death he has done away with all that stood in the way of our fellowship with God, . . . that we may assuredly be his children, be upheld by . . . love, be guided . . . all the days of our life and rejoice in the hope of [Christ's] glory. . . .

In the fellowship of his sufferings, he calls us to crucify the . . . [former personal] lusts and bear trials and tribulations patiently, to the glory of [Christ's] name. In the power of his resurrection he calls us to newness of life. In the fellowship of his spirit he joins us together, and seeks to change us into his image. By the same spirit he pours his love into our hearts, so that we may love one another, and our enemies for his sake.

If . . . [anyone] will not lay this to heart, but is minded to continue in sin and unrighteousness, let . . . [that person] not approach the table of the Lord. Let [us] examine ourselves and so let us eat of the bread and drink of the cup. The worthiness which the Lord requires from us is that we be truly sorry for our sins and find our joy and salvation in Christ. He invites us to partake of his holy meal.

Adapted from *The Book of Common Worship* of the Church of South India. Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 3.

Penitence/Lent

Why I Come to the Lord's Table

I come not because I am worthy, not for any righteousness of mine. For I have sinned and fallen short of what, by God's help, I might have been.

But, I come because Christ bids me come. It is his table. And he invites me.

I come because it is a memorial to him, as oft as it is done in remembrance of him. And when I remember him, his life, his sufferings and death, I find myself humbling myself in his presence and bowing in worship.

I come because here is portrayed Christian self-denial, and I am taught very forcibly the virtue of sacrifice on behalf of another which has salvation in it.

I come because here I have opportunity to acknowledge my unworthiness and to make a new start.

I come, because here I find comfort and peace.

I come, because here I find hope.

I come, because I rise from this place with new strength, courage and power to live for him who died for me.

From *Contemporary Worship Services*, by James Christensen. Revell, 1971, p. 146f.

Penitence/Lent

Jesus said, "I did not come to invite virtuous people, but sinners." — *Mark 2:17 (NEB)*.

We do not dare to come to this table trusting in our
own goodness and virtue.

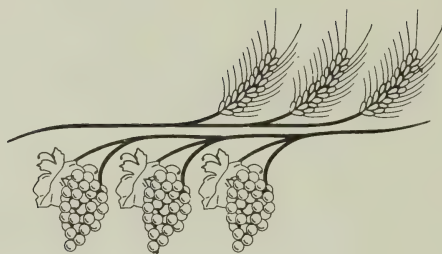
We come because we are sinful . . . [people]
and need forgiveness.

We come because we are hungry for life and
need to be fed. . . .

We come because Christ has invited us sinners.

We come in gratitude and wonder
to offer our very selves . . . ,
in worship and adoration.

[We come in the name of Jesus Christ.]



Scripture/Lent

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Let us hear how Paul tells how this sacrament began:

The tradition which I have passed on to you goes right back to the Lord. That tradition tells that on the night on which he was being delivered into the hands of his enemies, the Lord Jesus took a loaf, and when he had thanked God for it, he broke it and said:

This means my body which is for you.

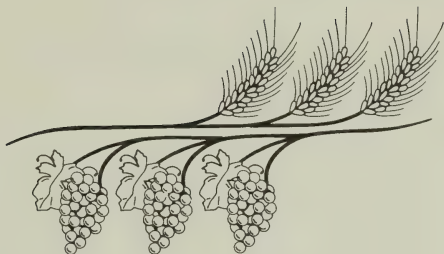
You must continue to do this to make you remember me.

In the same way, at the end of the meal he took the cup too, and said:

This cup stands for the new relationship with God made possible at the cost of my death. You must continue to do this as often as you drink it to make you remember me.

For every time you eat this loaf and drink this cup you are publicly proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes again.

From *The Lord's Supper*, by William Barclay. Abingdon, 1967, p. 117.



Self-Examination/Lent

When I weigh thy worthiness, O Lord, and mine own vileness, I tremble exceedingly, and am confounded within myself.

For if I come not unto thee, I fly from life, and if I unworthily intrude myself, I incur thy displeasure.

What therefore shall I do, O my God, my helper and my counsellor in all necessity?

Teach thou me the right way, appoint me some brief exercise, suitable to this holy communion.

For it is good for me to know how I should reverently and religiously prepare my heart for thee, for the profitable receiving of this sacrament of thine, or for the celebrating of so great and divine a sacrifice.

From *Of the Imitation of Christ*, Book Four, by Thomas a' Kempis (1380-1471). London: Longmans Green And Company, 1890, p. 185.

Self-Examination/Lent

A Prayer Form

Be still and know that I am God.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high? God hath showed thee . . . what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

I will go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness.

Give sentence with me, O God. O deliver me from deceitfulness and wickedness. For thou art the God of my strength.

O send out thy light and thy truth; that they may lead me, and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling.

And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness, and upon the harp will I give thanks unto thee, O God, my God.

Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God . . . which is the health of thy countenance. . . .

From various scripture sources. See William Robinson, *A Companion to the Communion Service*, by William Robinson. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 15.



Self-Examination/Lent

[Sisters and brothers,] we have come together to hear God's most holy word, and to receive the body and blood of the Lord. Let us therefore . . . examine ourselves in silence, seeking God's grace that we may draw near . . . with faith and repentance.

(After a short silence, the Minister says:)

Ye who do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to live a new life, following the commandments of God and walking from henceforth in . . . [God's] holy ways, make your humble confession . . . , that you may be reconciled anew to [God] through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cup/Holy Week

The Lord's Supper

He took the cup and gave thanks.
It was a cup of sorrow.
The agony of Gethsemane was in it.
The mockery of the crown of thorns was in it.
The thirst of Calvary was in it.
Yet he gave thanks.

It was the cup of death.
It held the symbol of his blood.
The shadow of the cross was upon it.
Yet he took the cup and gave thanks.
And then, and then, he invited them to drink.
He gave thanks, for he had eyes to see.
Eyes that needed not the dim light of lamps;
Eyes that saw through the darkness and beyond.
He saw the cup as the cup of life.
The symbol of his power was in it.
The promise of his forgiveness was in it.
The emblem of his love was in it.
He saw the cup as a cup of triumph—

The joy of the redeemed was in it,
The glory of his crown was in it,
The vision of his kingdom was in it;
And so he took the cup and gave thanks,
And invited them to drink,
It was the cup of their consecration.

W. C. Smalley in *The Secret Place*, undated.

The Sacrament of the Altar

How the master of the house should explain it simply to his household.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Answer: It is the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the Bread and Wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, under the institution of Christ himself.

Where is this written?

Answer: Thus say the holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul.

The Lord Jesus in the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take; eat. This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, and gave it to them saying, Take this and drink ye all of it. This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins; this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.

What avails it to eat and drink thus?

Answer: This is shown by the words, "Given for you and shed for you for the remission of sins." This is to say that in the sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation were bestowed on us by these words. For where forgiveness of sins is, there is also life and salvation.

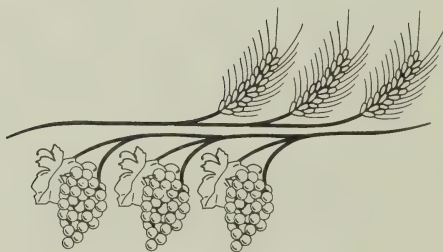
How can bodily eating and drinking accomplish these great things?

Answer: Eating and drinking do not indeed accomplish this, but the words which stand there, "Given for you and shed for you for the remission of sins." These words,

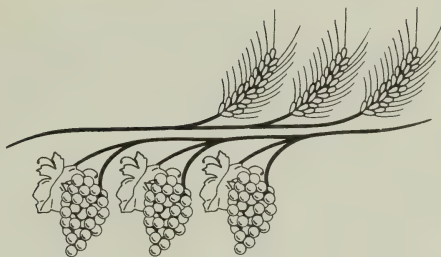
together with the bodily eating and drinking, are the most important part of this sacrament, and whoever believes these words, he has what they say, and as they speak namely, remission of sins.

Who, then, are they who receive this sacrament worthily?

Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are in truth a good external discipline, but . . . [one] is truly worthy and prepared who believes the words, “Given for you and shed for the remission of sins.” But . . . [one] who does not believe them is unworthy and not prepared. For the words, “For you” demand truly believing hearts.



Adapted from Martin Luther, in “Luther’s Catechism” #6 *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 291.



Invitation/Holy Week

Jesus Christ invites us to dine, to feast, to celebrate with him. He walked among us, a man, on our earth and in our world of conflict. He commanded us to remember his death, his death which gives us life: and to wait for him until he comes in glory. . . . Therefore, remembering his death, believing in his rising from the grave, longing to recognize his presence; now in this place, we obey his command; we offer bread and wine, we offer ourselves, to be used. . . .

On the night in which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. . . . He gave thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take, eat, this is my body. Do this in remembrance of me." He also took the cup . . . he gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the New Agreement, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

Adapted from The Algoma Liturgy, *Experiment and Liturgy*. The Anglican Church of Canada, c. 1959, p.39.

Memorial/Holy Week

Dearly beloved, as we draw near to the Lord's Table, let us gratefully remember that our Lord instituted this sacrament for the perpetual memory of his dying love for our sakes and the pledge of his undying love; as a bond for our union with him and with each other as members of his mystical body; as a seal of his promises to us and a renewal of our obedience to him; and for the blessed assurance of his presence with us, who are gathered here in his name. Let us call to mind the words of St. John, which truly set forth the spirit and meaning of this sacred memorial. (see *John 13:34, 35, 14:23ff.*)



From *Worship Highways*, by Samuel W. Hutton and Noel Leonard Smith.
CBP Press, 1943, p.252.

Minister: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

Response: We lift them up unto the Lord.

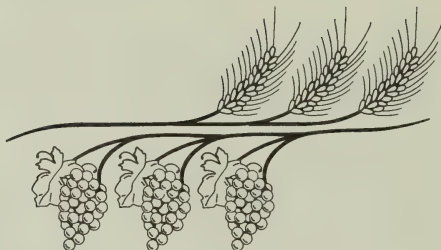
Minister: Let us give thanks unto the Lord.

Response: It is meet and right.

Minister: We give thee thanks, O God, through thy beloved son, Jesus Christ whom thou didst send to us in the last times to be a savior and redeemer and the messenger of thy will; who is thy inseparable word, through whom thou madest all things and in whom thou wast well pleased. Thou didst send him from heaven into the virgin's womb; he was conceived and was incarnate, and was shown to be thy son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin; who, fulfilling thy will and preparing for thee a holy people, stretched out his hands in suffering, that he might free from suffering them that believed on thee.

Who when he was being betrayed to his voluntary suffering, that he might destroy death, break the chains of the devil, tread hell underfoot, bring forth the righteous [therefrom] and set a bound [to it], and that he might manifest his resurrection, took bread and gave thanks to thee and said, *Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you.* Likewise also the cup, saying, *This is my blood which is shed for you. As oft as ye do this ye shall do it in remembrance of me.*

From an Early Eucharistic Canon (c. 225). Minister substituted for Bishop in editing. From the apostolic tradition of Hippolytus, probably part compilation, part composition. In *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943. p. 106.

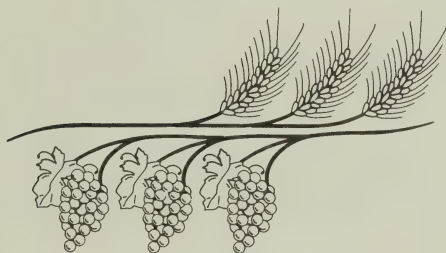


Privilege/Holy Week

The Lord's Table

The privilege is ours to accept his call
To sup with him,
Ours to share his food, his presence,
His breaking heart;
Ours to know his dream, his plans, his goal;
Ours to bear his load, his task, his cross;
Ours to eat, to drink, to carry on his work
Even to the uttermost parts of the earth.
Let us partake together.

Sam Pugh in *World Call*, May, 1973, p. 48.



Lord's Table/Maundy Thursday

This is the Lord's Table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared. . . .

The Apostle Paul has written:

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[Let us bring our gifts to Almighty God.]



Joy/Easter

Beloved in Christ, the gospels tell us that on the first day of the week, the same day on which our Lord rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples in the place where they were gathered, and was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Come then to the joyful feast of the Lord. Let us prepare his table with the offerings of our life and labor.

From *An Order of Worship*, by the Executive Committee of the Consultation on Church Union. Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1968, p. 27.



Joy/First Sunday after Easter

Luke the Evangelist records that on the evening of the first day of the week, the same day on which our Lord rose from the dead, when he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened and they knew him.

Beloved, this is the joyful feast of the people of God. Come from the East and the West, and from the North and the South, and gather around the table of the Lord.

Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers [and sisters] dwell in unity. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (Follow with prayer of thanksgiving.)



Celebration/Eastertide

The Feast of Life

Come! O People, come!

*Let us celebrate the supper of the Lord,
let us together bake a giant loaf,
and together prepare the jars of wine
as at the wedding feast in Cana.*

Come, O people, come to the table of the Lord.

*Let the women not forget the salt
Nor the men the leaven
And let us invite many guests:
the lame, the blind, the deaf, the poor.*

Come, O people, come to this meeting with the Lord.

Quickly now!

Let us follow the recipe of our Lord;

Let us together knead the dough with our hands,

And watch with joy the rising bread.

Come, O people come for this celebration with our Lord.

Because today we are celebrating

Our commitment to Christ Jesus;

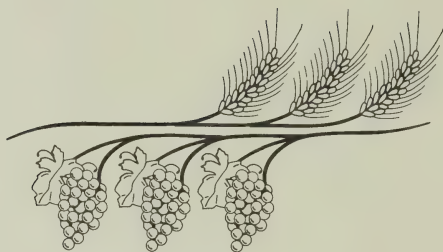
Today we are renewing our commitment to the Kingdom;

And no one shall go hungry away.

Come, let us participate in the feast of life with our Lord.



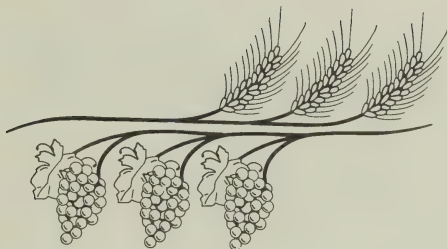
From *Jesus Christ—the Light of the World*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, p. 69.



Christian Life/Eastertide

We come to the Lord's Table to testify, not that we are righteous, but that we sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ and that we wish truly to be his disciples. All ye, therefore, who do truly and earnestly desire to learn of the Savior and to cooperate in the study and practice of his religion; who would live in love . . . with your neighbors and would grow in the Christian life, draw near with faith and in sacred remembrance, and take this holy sacrament to the comfort of your spirits.

Adapted from a Communion Service by Dr. Beryl S. Kinser, Springfield, Illinois.



Christian Life/Eastertide

Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God.

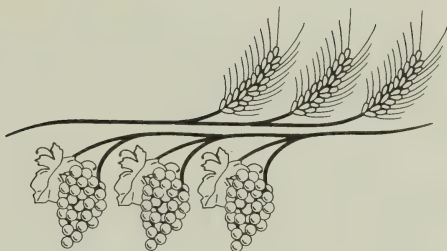
From *Hymnbook for Christian Worship*, No. 671. CBP Press, 1970, No original source acknowledged.



Exhortation/Eastertide

I bidde you in the name of God, I call you in Christ's behalf, I exhort you, as you loue your owne saluacion, that ye wilbe partakers of thys holy communion. . . . These thynges if ye earnestly considre, ye shal by God's grace returne to a better mynd, for the obteyning whe-reof, we shall make our humble petitions while we shall receiue the holy communion.

A sixteenth Century exhortation to attend Communion from the Prayer Book of 1552 in *When Protestants Worship*, by George Hedley. Cooperative Publishing Association and Abingdon Press, 1961, p. 71.



Exhortation/Easter

We hail you in the name of God
We call you in Christ's behalf
We persuade you as you value your own salvation,
that you participate in this holy communion. . . .

These things, if given earnest consideration shall, by God's grace return to you a refreshed mind, and to obtain it, we make humble petition (requests) while we receive the holy communion.

Invitation/Eastertide

The message to the Church of Laodicea, found in the Revelation, included a rather critical evaluation of both behavior and attitudes. It continued with the following direction:

“I advise you, then, to buy gold from me, pure gold, in order to be rich. Buy also white clothing to dress yourself and cover up your shameful nakedness. Buy also some ointment to put on your eyes, so that you may see. I rebuke and punish all whom I love. Be earnest then, and turn from your sins. Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his house and eat with him, and he will eat with me.”

—*Revelation 3:18-20 (TEV)*

In Christ's name we invite to this communion those who sincerely repent of their sins, who love their neighbors, and who are willing to live a new kind of life under God's direction.

We invite you. Expectantly, faithfully receive this sacrament and admit your own sins to a forgiving God, the sovereign Lord of all.

We encourage you. Give thanks as you participate, for God's gift of redeeming love.

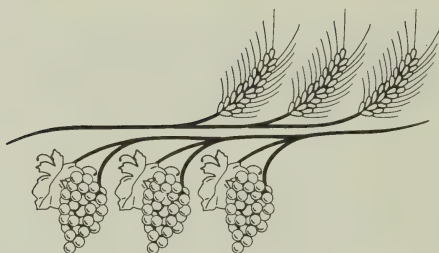
We love you. As Christian sisters and brothers we make this an occasion of sharing. We love because God first loved us.

From *Ventures in Worship*, Vol. 2, p. 132, edited by David James Randolph. Copyright © 1970 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

After this manner in calling himself the Bread of Life, the Lord willed to teach not only that salvation is laid up for us in faith in his death and resurrection, but also that a real communication of himself brings to pass that his life passes into us and becomes ours, not otherwise than bread, when it is taken for nourishment, supplies strength to the body. . . . Let it be a conclusion that our souls are fed by the flesh and blood of Christ, as our bodily life is sustained by bread and wine. For the analogy of the sign would not hold good if our souls did not find their nourishment in Christ, which cannot be unless Christ is really joined to us and refreshes us by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood.



John Calvin in *A Companion to the Communion Service*, by William Robinson. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 46. Robinson's editing retained.



Prayer/Eastertide

Let us begin our celebration of Holy Communion with prayer.

Our [loving God], you have promised that when two or more are gathered in your name you will be with them. We give you thanks for that promise, and we pray that we might be aware of your promise at this time. . . .

As we prepare ourselves for this celebration of Holy Communion, [O God], we realize that we have not always trusted in you as fully as we should. We have not lived life at its highest level, but have often been too greatly concerned about ourselves and, therefore, have given little thought for the concerns of others. Help us to be honest with ourselves and help us to realize our need to be open with you. We pray that we may feel the power of your forgiveness so that we may be lifted above the darkness of our past into the light of a new day and thereby given hope.

We pray this in the name of Christ, who is our hope and the hope of the world. Amen.

*Adapted from *An Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion in the Home and Hospital*, leaflet, by Eldon L. Irving. The Worship Study Commission, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).*



Remembrance/Eastertide

Let us with humility and thanksgiving come to this Communion. Our Lord Jesus Christ has set the table. He who loved us and gave himself up for us invites us to partake, hence the Lord's Supper cannot be the special possession of any person or group.

If with all our heart we love the Lord and desire to do this, as he said, "In remembrance of me," then it is our gracious privilege to share in this communion with him. Let us examine our hearts and prepare our minds that we may truly feed on the living bread.

Sunday Service/Eastertide

And on the day which is called the day of the sun, there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or in the country; and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then the reader ceases and the president speaks, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate these excellent examples. Then we all rise together and offer prayer; and, as we said before, when we have concluded our prayers, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president in like manner offers up prayers and thanksgivings with all his might; and the people assent with *Amen*; and there is the distribution and partaking by all of the Eucharistic elements; and to them that are not present they are sent by the hand of the deacons. And they that are prosperous and wish to do so give what they will, each [individual] after his choice. What is collected is deposited with the president, who gives aid to the orphans and widows and such as are in want by reason of sickness or other cause; and to those also that are in prison, and to strangers from abroad, in fact to all that are in need . . . [the president] is a protector.

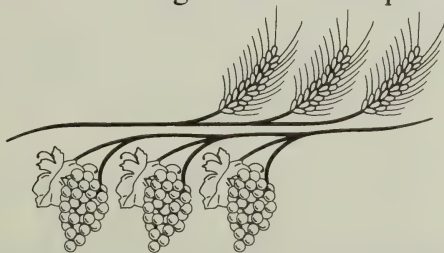
We hold our common assembly on the day of the sun, because it is the first day, on which God put to flight darkness and chaos [matter] and the world, and on the same day Jesus Christ our saviour rose from the dead . . . he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them these things, which we have also handed on to you for your consideration.

Justin, *Apology* I, lxvii. Quoted in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, pp.94-95.

We are at the point where *action* is supreme—the *taking* of the bread, the *thanksgiving* for the bread, the *breaking* of the bread, the *giving* of the bread, the *eating*; the *taking* of the cup, the *thanksgiving* for the cup, the *outpouring*, the *giving* of the cup, the *drinking*. Words are but idle things at such a moment.

Here we are at the most solemn moment of our Lord's death. It is as if we stood with the small company of believers beneath the cross. The separate blessing of the bread and of the cup represents the actual immolation of our Lord—the separation of the blood from the body. The fraction or breaking of the bread represents the bruising of his body, and the outpouring of the wine the shedding of his blood; so, in a threefold way we shew forth his death in the *action* of the service.

In eating and drinking we join ourselves to his sacrificial act in the most intimate way possible, and to each other as one body, feeding by faith in our hearts upon his body and blood. Your taking of this holy food means that you so identify yourself with him that, by his grace, you determine to take his way of redemptive love in the world. Religious fervor apart from moral quality has no place in Christianity. This is a time for deep silence and strong resolution through absolute dependence upon him.



From *A Companion to the Communion Service*. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 42.

Christian Life/Commitment

It is proper and good for us
 always and everywhere
 to give you our thanks,
 God . . . of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for life, for memory and hope.
We thank you for growth, for certainty and change.
We thank you for all our powers to reason and imagine.

But most of all we thank you for your love and our access
to you,
For the Holy Spirit joining us to you and each other,
And for our Lord . . .
 who is the light of the world,
 true bread of heaven,
 the way and the truth and life.

Because he called disciples his friends,
 and made himself a sacrifice for them,
 and broke the bread with them and shared the
 cup, giving thanks to you and saying,
 "This is my body,
 this is my covenant blood,"
so now we break bread and share wine,
 asking you to blend your action with ours
 so that we may be united with Christ,
 may share his worship,
 gain his life,
 and go out to be his body in the world. . . .

Adapted from *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship*, ed. by Caryl Micklem. Eerdmans, 1967, p. 92.

Commemoration/Pentecost

Our . . . [people] believe that the Eucharist was instituted by the Lord for a memorial of himself, even of his sacrifice, and, if it be lawful so to speak, to be a commemorative sacrifice, not only to be a sacrament and for spiritual nourishment. . . . The sacrifice which is there is Eucharist, of which sacrifice the law is that [the one] who offers it is to partake of it, and . . . partake by receiving and eating, as the savior ordered. For to partake by “sharing in the prayer,” that indeed is a fresh and novel way of partaking. . . . Willingly we allow that a memory of the sacrifice is made there. That your Christ made of bread is sacrificed there we will never allow.



Adapted from Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 422.

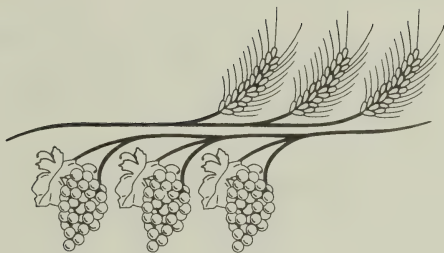
Community/Pentecost

Our participation in the Eucharist brings to us the most intimate point of community, of sharing and of unity. In Christ's name we dedicate our gifts, for Christ's sake we overlook and overcome our differences and in Christ's love we commune together.

"While we have many differences, we come and greet one another in the name of Jesus Christ! For Christ unified us by his call to come and be his people. Because he loves us, we can love one another.

"Thus we gather in the community of faith, the Church, and recognize our common relationship through God's son. We praise God for making this possible and take up the burden of sharing such love and unity with the rest of the world."

From a litany in "The Creative Church," by L. Jim Anthis. *The Disciple*, May 4, 1975, p. 18.



Corporate Worship/Pentecost

The service of Holy Communion is the Lord's own service, instituted by him. It is the supreme form of Christian worship offered to God by the church as such. It is therefore *corporate* worship. It is not achieved by the . . . [liturgist] who celebrates, but by the whole congregation gathered together. You are a member of that congregation. It is therefore essential that you prepare yourself for this worship, for it cannot fittingly be offered without real preparation. To come heedlessly is a fearful thing, as St. Paul told the Corinthian Christians. Then we make the service a pure piece of ritual and nothing more, and we diminish its spiritual benefit, not only to ourselves, but to the whole church, we owe it to our Lord; we owe it to our fellow Christians; and we owe it to ourselves, adequately to prepare ourselves for this solemn though joyous act of worship.

From *A Companion to the Communion Service*, by William Robinson. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 14.

Faith/Pentecost

It is a great mystery, and great wisdom and exercise of faith lie in it, how to obtain a participation of Christ. . . . Neither is there in this ordinance a *naked figure*—a naked representation; there is something in the figure, something in the representation; but there is not all in it.

When the bread is broken, it is a figure, a representation that the body of Christ was broken for us; and the pouring out of the wine is a figure and representation of the pouring of the blood of Christ or the pouring forth of his soul unto death. And there are useful meditations which may arise from thence; but in this ordinance there is a real exhibition of Christ unto every believing soul . . . in this ordinance Christ tenders himself. “This is my body,” saith he; “this do in remembrance of me.” He makes an immediate tender of himself unto a believing soul, and calls our faith unto a respect to his grace, to his love, to his readiness to unite and spiritually incorporate with us. . . .

In one word, faith is so to receive him as to enable us to sit down at God’s table as those that are the Lord’s friends, as those that are invited to feast upon the sacrifice. . . .

John Owen (1616-1683) in *A Companion to the Communion Service*, by William Robinson. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p.49.

Living Memorial/Pentecost

As the followers of Jesus have done across the centuries of Christian history we gather about the Lord's table in remembrance of him to re-enact the experiences and relive the fellowship of that last supper.

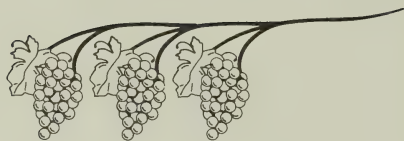
It is not so much a memorial to the martyred founder of our faith as it is to a living experience wherein, by remembering Jesus, we have spiritual fellowship with the living Lord.

It is the pivot about which our worship revolves. It is the celebration of the beginning of the church and of the inauguration of the new covenant. Here we accept anew our heritage of God's redeeming grace, renew our dedication to our Lord, revitalize our fellowship with one another, and proclaim our certainty of the final victory of God's kingdom.

Let us remember Jesus declaring the bread to be his body and asking the disciples to partake of it, thus binding them to himself and to one another, in a new relationship, a committed fellowship, the beginning of the church.

Let us remember Jesus taking the cup, and calling it the blood of the new covenant, thus validating the gospel, the good news, that we may become children of God, not by works and meticulous observation of the law but by our repentance and God's forgiveness.

In remembrance of Jesus in that upper room and what he did there, let all who confess him as Lord and savior share in this fellowship of his table.



Sacrament/Pentecost

A sacrament is much more than a symbol, as a symbol is more than a memorial. It is quite inadequate to speak of the sacrament as an object-lesson—as if its purpose were to convey new truth instead of the living redeemer. It is not an hour of instruction but of communion. It is an act, not a lesson; and it is not a spectacle nor a ceremony. It does something. It is an *opus operatum*. More, it is an act of the church more than of the individual. Further still, it is an act created by the eternal Act of Christ which made and makes the Church. At last it is the Act of Christ present in the Church, which does not so much live as Christ lives in it. It is Christ's act, offering himself to . . . [us] rather than the act of the Church offering Christ to God. Now, as at the first, it is Christ giving over to . . . [us] the sacrifice he was making once for all to God . . . If the elements are and remain material, the action which uses them is real. . . .

Adapted from P.T. Forsyth in *A Companion to the Communion Service*, by William Robinson. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1955, p. 55.

Sharing/Pentecost

“Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
The water his blood that died on the tree;
The holy supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another’s need;
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.”

From “The Vision of Sir Launfal,” by James Russell Lowell (1819-1891).

Tradition, Early/Pentecost

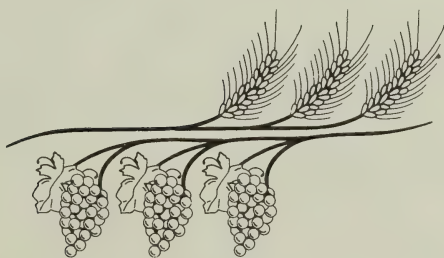
The first part of this section—lxv—of Justin's Apology, dating from ca. A.D. 150 gives instruction on washing the candidate. The statement that follows has not been edited.

We salute one another with a kiss when we have ended the prayers. Then is brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of water and wine. And he takes them and offers up praise and glory to the father of all things, through the name of his son and of the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at length that we are deemed worthy of these things at his hand. When he has completed the prayers and thanksgiving, all the people present assent by saying Amen. . . . When the president has given thanks and all the people have assented, those who are called deacons with us give to those present a portion of the Eucharistic bread and wine and water, and carry it away to those who are absent.

This food is called with us the Eucharist, and of it none is allowed to partake but that he believes that our teachings are true, and has been washed with the washing for the remission of sins and unto regeneration, and who so lives as Christ directed. For we do not receive them as

ordinary food or ordinary drink; but as by the word of God, Jesus Christ our savior took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also, we are taught, the food blessed by the prayer of the word which we received from him, by which through its transformation, our blood and flesh is nourished, this food is the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh. For the Apostles, in the memoirs made by them, which are called gospels, have thus narrated that the command was given; that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and said, "This do ye in remembrance of me; this is my body." And he took the cup likewise and said, "This is my blood," and he gave it to them alone. . . .

Now we always thereafter remind one another of these things; and those that have the means assist them that are in need; and we visit one another continually. And at all our meals we bless the maker of all things through his son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Ghost. . . .



Justin, *Apology*, in *Documents of the Christian Church*, by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 93.

Transformation/Pentecost

The Lord's Supper is to the Christian as sacred and as solemn as prayer to God, and as joyful as the hope of immortality and eternal life . . . [This] hope before God, springing from the death of . . . [the] Son, is gratefully exhibited and expressed by him in the observance of this institution.

While . . . [the Christian] participates of the symbolic loaf . . . [showing] faith in, and . . . [being fed by] the Bread of Life. . . . With sacred joy and blissful hope . . . [that person] hears the savior say, "This is my body broken—this is my blood shed for you" . . . Here . . . [the Christian] knows no . . . [one] after the flesh.

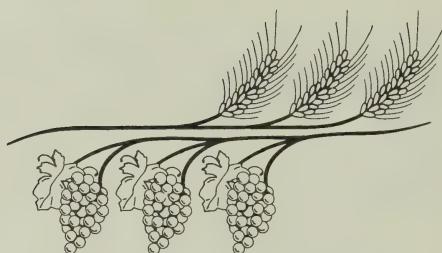
Ties that spring from eternal love, revealed in blood and addressed to . . . [the] senses in symbols adapted to the whole . . . [person], draw forth all that is within . . . of complacent affection and feeling to those joints heir. . . [to] the grace of eternal life. While it represents to . . . [the person] "the bread of Life,"—all the salvation of the Lord—it is the strength of . . . faith, the joy of . . . hope, and the life . . . of love. It cherishes the peace of God, and inscribes the image of God upon . . . [the] heart, and leaves not out of view the revival of . . . [the] body from the dust of death, and its glorious transformation to the likeness of the Son of God. . . . It is a religious feast: a feast of joy and gladness.

Adapted from Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) in *A Companion to the Communion Service*. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1942, p. 52.

For we offer . . . the things that are . . . [God's], proclaiming harmoniously the unity of flesh and spirit. For as the bread of the earth, receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but Eucharist, consisting of two things, an earthly, and a heavenly; so also our bodies, partaking of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of eternal resurrection.



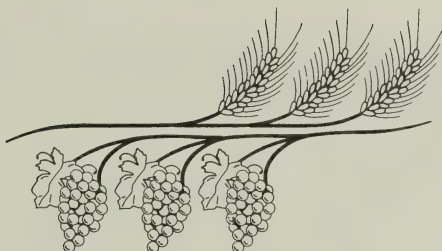
Edited from Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, xviii, 5,
in *Documents of the Christian Church*, by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 106.



Unity/Pentecost

Our sectarianism has . . . reduced the Lord's Supper to a sentimental act of individual memory, instead of a sacramental act of communion of the whole Body of Christ in which each member participates. The *broken* body, symbolized by the breaking of bread, is—strange paradox—the *united* body of the church! The broken bread spells the unbroken body. It can be received only by the unbroken body. And a church in schism can receive it in truth only as it deliberately and by conscious intention confesses the incompleteness of its offering so long as it is in schism, and enlarges its communion beyond the boundaries of its own sect, so as to embrace, potentially, all those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper belongs to the church's catholicity, it is a function of catholicity, and it cannot be fully complete until its very celebration is an act of a church that is holy and catholic.

Charles Clayton Morrison in *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*, ed. by Charles L. Wallis, Harper and Row, 1954, p. 197.



Unity/Pentecost

The table of our Lord Jesus Christ is open to all who are in communion with the Church universal. We therefore invite members of any branch thereof who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to join with us in this holy fellowship.

Beloved in the Lord, draw near to the holy table, and hear the gracious words of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart: and you will find rest for your souls.

From *The Book of Common Order*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1979, p. 20.

Universality/Pentecost

The universality of the invitation makes every celebration of the eucharist a missionary event. For it is an offer of salvation through the transforming presence of Christ to all who will accept; and on the shadow side, those who will not yet, or will no longer, accept the invitation are choosing death rather than life, are excluding themselves from salvation.

Knowing that God is inviting all people to the feasting in the final kingdom, the church may be confident that it is the divine will that as many as possible should be brought to enjoy already the meal which is the sign of the feasting. It is strange that though the "Compel them to come in" of Luke 14:23 has often inspired the church in its missionary task, yet the church in all its denominations has shown itself loath to accept the implications of the fact that *anakason eiselthein* is not an isolated expression but part of the parable of the great supper. We have pressed people to come in . . . and then left them without food and drink at the meal which is the sign of the great supper of the final kingdom, telling them rather that they must wait several years until, by their acquired knowledge and virtues, they have earned the right . . . and only then will they be admitted to the Lord's Table.



Eucharist and Eschatology, by Geoffrey Wainwright. London: Epworth Press, 1971, p. 130.

Interrelationship/Nature Study

When you partake of the Lord's Supper have you thought that the bread had a direct connection with the loaf that Jesus blessed and broke? As the whole human family is interrelated and can be traced back to one common source, so the vegetable kingdom is likewise related. The grains of wheat sown today have come from similar grains in Christ's time. So we all sit at a common table. When he said, "This is my body," he was partaking of that which gave him life. When the minister today says, "Take, eat," . . . [there will be passed] to us that which will give us life. We are all members of this one body. That makes us brothers [and sisters].



Edited from J.P. Hauser in *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*, ed by Charles L. Wallis. Harper and Row, 1954, p. 198.

Life/Nature Sunday

We would like to [welcome] . . . all here to come with all that is your flesh and blood, and share it with your God [in the whole creation]. This is an invitation to remember God's gift to us in Christ and its meaning for our lives today.

This is how life is—broken—imperfect. But you can live from this, and you can give it to your neighbor . . . [who] can receive nourishment.

Let us now remember the man, Christ, who because he was broken for us, lives. Let us accept the gift!

And living is the spilling out of our life. It is in freely and knowingly pouring forth ourselves that others can live.

Let us now remember the man, Christ, who poured forth his whole being that we might live. Let us accept the gift!



Adapted from *A Guide to Contemporary Worship*, ed. Ralph E. Dessem.
p. 76.

Brokenness/Kingdomtide

Taking Brokenness Into Ourselves

One cannot eat the bread that is broken without accepting responsibility to do something about the brokenness that is still part of the body. One cannot be recognized or known by God if one does not recognize Christ in his broken members (cf. *Luke 24:35*). . . .

We take brokenness into ourselves and it becomes part of us. And as Jesus had offered himself as covenant so that all could have access to him, somehow our lives as covenant have to be lived so that as a result, as many people as possible can be brought into deeper sharing of the earth's resources, that they may become more fully the image of God that they are called to be. Our Amens have to be a commitment to bind up wounds, to heal the broken, to enable all to have access to life—or else they become empty words.

To participate in the eucharist without being concerned about the community of all those in the world who can neither eat nor drink what they need for life is to be identified with those who went through rituals rejected by God. (*Isa. 1:1ff.*)

We must become the sacramental reality if it is to be real in our lives. In the case of the eucharist, we are to become the covenant, the body broken that others may be healed, the blood poured out that others may have access to life.

Michael Crosby in *Sharing One Bread, Sharing One Mission: The Eucharist as Missionary Event*, compiled and edited by Jean Stromberg. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, p 46. See *Thy Will Be Done*, by M. H. Crosby. Orbis, 1977, pp. 130-131.



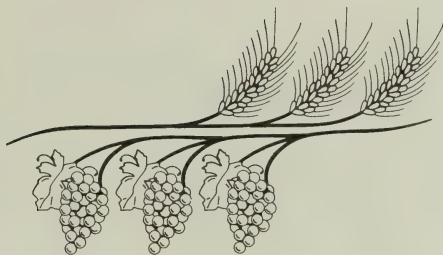
Central Act/Kingdomtide

The Lord's Supper is the central act of Christian worship. Indeed, it is the very heart of the church's worship, wherein people of God in joyous thanksgiving bear witness both individually and corporately to the saving act of Jesus Christ. In the Lord's Supper, we respond in gratitude to God's great act of love expressed through the gift of . . . our Lord, Jesus Christ.

As participants in this act of worship, the people of God experience genuine fellowship with God and with one another. They acknowledge, both spiritually and symbolically the new life in Christ and the gift of eternal life that is made possible by the forgiveness of their sins.

The observance of the Lord's Supper must be understood as an act of love and gratitude on the part of God's people. The observance is their commemoration of the Lord's death, resurrection and living presence. Herein, the eternal fellowship of God's people is symbolically affirmed, and the fullness of their new life is Christ Jesus is made manifest to all the world. (*2 Corinthians 5:17-19*)

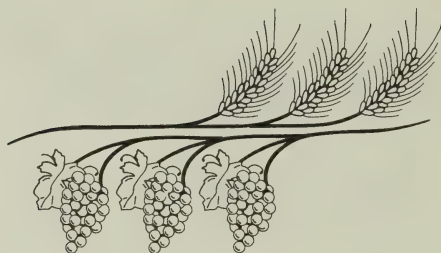
Walter Bingham, *Let's Think about the Lord's Supper*. Home and State Missions Planning Council, 1968.



Christ's Life/Kingdomtide

That sacred communion of his own flesh and blood by which Christ pours his own life into us, just as if he were to penetrate into the marrow of our bones, he witnesses and attests in the Supper. And that he does not by putting before us a vain or empty sign, but offering there the efficacy of his spirit, by which he fulfills his promise. And in truth he offers and displays the things there signified to all who share that spiritual feast; though only by the faithful is it perceived and its fruits enjoyed. . . . If it is true that the visible sign is offered to us to attest the granting of the invisible reality, then, on receiving the symbol of the body, we may be confident that the body itself is no less given to us.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 17. *Documents of the Christian Church*, by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 300.



Hope/Kingdomtide

“Behold the man,” [Behold the person], the hope of the world. As we celebrate the sacrament, we should keep in mind that its meaning embraces the three dimensions of time. It is a memorial of the past, the recall of his earthly life with its atoning summit upon the cross. The bread and wine symbolize, too, his continuing presence which nourishes the devout believer. The communion is also an account of that which is to come. Says Paul in one of the earlier accounts of the Lord’s Supper, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” The sacrament is the symbol of hope—that in Jesus Christ we have the one for whom the centuries are looking and whose coming, in the flesh or the spirit, marks the consummation of all our mortal striving.

Adapted from Gerald F. Ensley in *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*, ed. by Charles L. Wallis. Harper and Row, 1954, p. 77.



Kingdom/ Kingdomtide

At the center of the church's life is the eucharist, the public declaration of thanksgiving for God's gift in Christ, and the participation of the disciples in the very life of Christ. It is a foretaste of the kingdom which proclaims the Lord's death until he comes. We celebrate the eucharist during the "in between," recalling God's act in history (anamnesis), experiencing the presence of the risen Lord, and anticipating the great feast at the end when God is all in all.

From *Your Kingdom Come*, Mission Perspectives, report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May, 1980. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980, p. 194.

Service/ Kingdomtide

What praise shall we bring to thee Lord Jesus?

What service can we render thee: or what thanksgiving can we offer that shall be worthy of thee? We shall be obedient to thy command. Breaking the bread in remembrance of thee, we will glorify thy name. Word of God! Name the greatest given among [us]! Thee we magnify and bless. . . .

In the name of Jesus
We bend our pride
In the name of Jesus
We forgive those who have wronged us.
In the name of Jesus,
We pray for pardon and peace.



Adapted from *The Rodborough Bede Book*. London: Independent Press Ltd., 1943, No. 121.

Symbols/Kingdomtide

We come together to celebrate Holy Communion. This acted-out parable of God's love was begun by Jesus with his first disciples. In this service, the token elements of [name the elements] unleavened wafers and grape juice will be used as symbols of the presence and love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Holy Spirit may be saying to us, as . . . to John of Patmos: "Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his house and eat with him, and he will eat with me" (*Revelation 3:20, TEV*).

In faith John recorded the saying of Jesus in his Gospel: "I am the living bread. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I give him is my flesh, which I give so that the world may live" (*John 6:51, TEV*).

Listen to this urgent appeal from our scriptures: "Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. . . . And God showed love for us by sending his only son into the world, so that we might have life through him. . . . Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then we should love one another" (*1 John 4:7-11, TEV*).

Hear this incredible insight of Paul: "What no one ever saw or heard, what no one ever thought could happen, is the very thing God prepared for those who love him" (*1 Corinthians 2:9, TEV*).

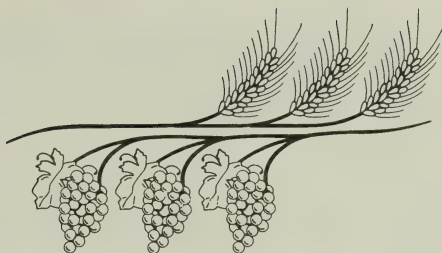
From *Ventures in Worship*, Vol. 3, pp. 136-137, edited by David James Randolph. Copyright © 1973 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.



Teaching/Kingdomtide

Concerning the Eucharist, give thanks in this way. First for the cup: "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David thy servant, which thou madest known to us through thy servant Jesus. To thee be glory for ever." And for the broken bread; "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge, which thou madest known to us through thy servant Jesus. To thee be glory for ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the hills, and was gathered together and made one, so let thy church be gathered together into thy kingdom from the ends of the earth; for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever."

From the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, second century. *Documents of the Christian Church*, by Henry Bettenson. Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 90.



Labor/Labor Day

[God], we offer you these gifts which you have given us,
this bread, this wine, this money.

With them we offer ourselves, our lives and our work.
As this bread and wine become body and blood of
our Lord,

So may we and all your Holy Church
Become effective channels of your reconciling love,
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from *Experiment and Liturgy*. The Anglican Church of Canada, c.
1959, p. 45.

Ecumenical/World Communion

[Fellow Christians], this is the joyful and holy feast of the People of God. "They shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

The Prayer of Humble Access

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies and souls may be made clean by his most precious Body and Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.



Adapted from *An Experimental Liturgy*, by J. G. Davies, G. Cope, and D. A. Taylor. John Knox Press, 1958, p. 46.

Equality/World Communion

Here at the table of the Lord we perceive in a mellow light those words of Holy Scripture that God hath made one all nations . . . who dwell on the earth. The inclusive nature of the supper is impressive. When it was instituted, Jesus invited the twelve, including Judas; not one was left out. The family aspect of the Lord's Supper is revealing. The idea of an unbroken bond that shall in time include all nations, tongues, tribes, is most inspiring. At the Lord's Table, divisions, schisms, cliques, and coteries, seem mean and contemptible. Sectarianism and denominational pride shrink and shrivel. In their place comes the picture of the shepherd who, having a hundred sheep and one of them lost, found no rest of body or peace of mind until the lost sheep was found, lifted upon his shoulder, brought back with rejoicing to the fold. . . .

The equality of all believers before God at the Lord's Table signifies the equality of all believers everywhere, a doctrine we have preached but fail to practice. The Lord's Supper is not a service; it is an inspirer of service. It is not a rite; it may be an aid to right living. The Lord's Supper is not a magical experience, though it is not without mystery. It is the soul seeking God and perceiving . . . symbols of life and ministry, faith, hope, and love. To receive the symbols of [Christ's] body and his blood and not perceive their relation to human society, the hopes and dreams, the fears and tears of the multitude, is to company with the betrayer who left the Lord's Table that night of nights and went out to bargain for his delivery into the hands of his enemies.

Adapted from Edgar DeWitt Jones in *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*, ed. Charles L. Wallis. Harper and Row, 1954, p. 197.



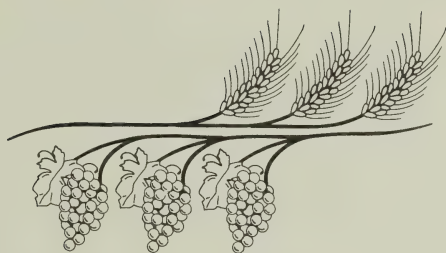
World/World Communion

Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this table
for solace only, and not for strength;
for pardon only, and not for renewal.

Let the grace of this holy communion
make us one body, one spirit in Christ,
That we may worthily serve the world in his name.

Risen Lord,
be known to us in the breaking of the bread.

From *Services for Trial Use*. The Church Hymnal Corp., 1971, p. 87.



World/World Communion

Communion

*This is my body, broken for thee, the Master said, While
breaking in his hands the Apostles' bread;
This is my blood, shed for thee—he took the cup,
Bidding his friends take theirs, too, and
With him sup.*

O Broken Bread, broken for me, O Living Bread!
O Bruis'ed Vine, bruised for me, Sustaining Vine!
Let me take up the cup—remembering
A hungry world, broken and unfed,
People athirst for thee, adrift, misled,
Needing, as Galileans needed, thee! . . . O living
Vine and Bread!

Mary Dickerson Bangham in *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*, ed.
by Charles L. Wallis. Harper and Row, 1954, p. 193.

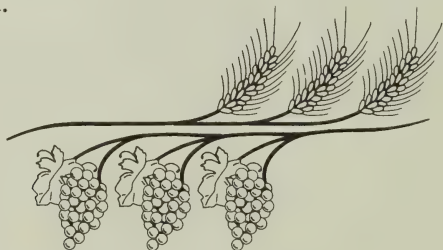
World Communion

O God, the invisible creator of the world, how wonderfully dost thou deal with us; how sweetly and graciously dost thou dispose of all things with thine elect, to whom thou offerest thyself to be received in this sacrament! . . .

For if this most holy sacrament were to be celebrated in one place only and consecrated by one only priest in the world; with how great desires dost thou think would . . . [people] be affected to that place, and toward such a priest of God, that they might be witnesses of the celebration of these divine mysteries?

But now many are made priests, and in many places Christ is offered; that the grace and love of God to [us] may appear so much the greater, the more widely this sacred communion is spread over the world.

Thanks be to thee, O merciful Jesu, thou eternal shepherd, that thou has vouchsafed to refresh us, who are poor and in a state of banishment, with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these mysteries with the words even of thine own mouth, "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will refresh you."



Adapted from *Of the Imitation of Christ*, Book Four, by Thomas a' Kempis (1380-1471). London: Longmans Green And Company, 1890, p. 174.

Purity/Week of Ministry

If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St. John Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive or administer this sacrament.

For it is not within the compass of [human] deserts . . . that [a person] should consecrate and administer this sacrament of Christ, and receive for food the bread of angels.

Great is this mystery; and great is the dignity of those, to whom is granted that which is not permitted to angels.

For only priests rightly ordained in the church have power to celebrate this sacrament, and to consecrate the body of Christ.

The priest indeed is the minister of God, by God's command and appointment: but God is there the principal author, and invisible worker. . . .

Thou oughtest therefore more to believe God almighty in this most excellent sacrament, than thine own sense or any visible sign.

And therefore thou art to approach this holy work with fear and reverence.

Consider attentively with thyself, and see what that is, whereof the ministry is delivered unto thee by the laying on of the bishop's hand.

Behold thou art made a priest, and consecrated to celebrate the Lord's sacrament; take heed now that thou offer this sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly, and at fit opportunities, and conduct thyself so as thou mayest be without reproof. . . .

When a priest doth celebrate the holy eucharist—
[God is honored
angels rejoice

the church is edified
the living are helped
the departed are upheld—
the priest becomes a partaker of all good things.]



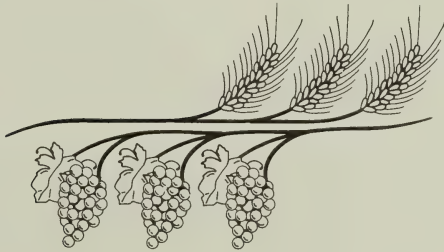
Adapted from *Of the Imitation of Christ*, Book Four, by Thomas a' Kempis
(1380-1471). London: Longmans Green And Company, 1890, p. 183.

Gifts/Thanksgiving

As this spiritual food is set before us, let each of us pause to offer a prayer of thanksgiving. Our fellowship is incomplete without the Presence of God. Our lives are inadequate without [God's] Son. So as we eat the bread and drink of the cup, let us think of the one who provided the table for us. We appreciate all good gifts that come from . . . [God] which are evident at this table—food, fellowship, gracious kindness and love.

We cannot come to this table without the graciousness of God. We cannot find meaning at this table without the fellowship of . . . [other Christians.] It is only as our unseen host, the Christ, is present here that we can break bread and drink of the cup to its fullest meaning.

Come, let us break bread together; come let us drink together in the name of Christ, and let us do these things in remembrance of [Jesus].



Adapted from Communion Service of the International Convention of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), October 13, 1963.

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